

FUTURE

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Robert W.
Lowndes,
Editor

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*"Pterodactyll",
thought Terat,
grabbing for
his dress-sword.
"I'm done for!"*

THEY DAYS ARE

They were the lords from the sky, the beneficent rulers of this new world. But they forgot that half-savage barbarians did not have the same high principles they themselves had — or that humans are rarely grateful for being saved from the errors of their ways. Particularly when the benefactors are obviously getting something out of it!

NUMBERED!

Feature Novelet of the Great Legend
By Wallace West



There were giants in the earth in those days and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men and they bare children unto them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.

Genesis, 6-4.

TERAF, Prince of Hellas, pressed his nose against a promenade deck porthole of the *Poscidon* as the liner drifted earthward at the end of her record-break-

ing run. Within half an hour the *Poscidon* would be docked at Atlan, but she was still so high that the capital of colonial Atlantis looked like a white button on the green silk of the Mediterranean valley.

Far to the east, Teraf could just make out the brown deserts of Arabia; northward were the mountains of his own Hellas, and he thought he glimpsed the marble porticos of Athens gleaming in the sunlight. To the westward, on the very edge of the horizon, lay a faint blue line which must be the Atlantic coast. The prince strained his eyes in an effort to catch sight of the mammoth dam between the Pillars of Heracles, but the distance was too great. Over all that expanse, masses of thunderheads were drifting, for it was the season of summer showers.



"Probably get a wetting when we land," Teraf commented idly to a passenger who had preempted a nearby porthole.

"Think of it," chirped the other, who looked like a college professor back from vacation. "And we had to beg for bath-water on Mars. Ab, if only they had some of this precipitation there!" The little fellow moved to a better vantage point, and Teraf was left to his own reflections.

"Same old town," he mused, staring down at the marble towers, fairy gardens and circular canals which were now hidden, now revealed by the hurrying clouds. "Same old people, too, I'll bet. Zeus Pitar's gout will be a little worse than when I left. Hera will be a little fatter but still fussing with her court receptions. Aphrodite? Well..." He gasped and grabbed for a stanchion as the *Poseidon's* pilot, deciding to risk the storm, allowed the ship to drop like a rock into the fleecy darkness of the clouds.

In a moment they were through. Now, Atlan lay close beneath, wet and shining, like a newly-cleansed jewel. Then the thousand-foot-long ship bumped gently on its runway and came to a rest with a groan like that of a tired living thing.

The doors of the promenade deck unscrewed with a sigh of compressed air. Earth-hungry passengers began streaming out on the dock followed by puffing stewards. That, of course, was the moment when the clouds opened and sent sheets of rain sweeping across the unprotected drome.

Pulling his helmet down over his red hair and swinging his elbows ruthlessly, Teraf tried to dodge through the crowd and escape the committee which, he was sure, Hera had sent to

welcome him. But it was no use; an officer whom he had failed to bribe pointed him out, and a group of officials in bedraggled scarlet cloaks drew themselves up before him.

"Welcome, Prince Teraf of Hellas!" proclaimed the spokesman, a dried-up wisp of humanity whom the new arrival remembered vaguely as Doctor Vanya, physician, high priest and official greeter of the Atlantean court. "Zeus Pitar sends his regrets that ill-health prevented his being here in person to welcome you and bids you wait upon him in the royal suite of the royal..."

"Hey, Prince! Prince!" someone was bawling above the roaring rain and the screams of the scurrying crowd. Then the owner of the voice, a lean and lanky youngster in civilian harness, thrust his dripping bronze figure through the mob and grabbed Teraf by the arm.

"Sorry, Prince," he apologized as Vanya and the other committee-men drew themselves up in soggy hauteur. "Hate to bother you, but I'm Hermes of the *Evening Planet*. The boys want a photograph and I want an interview. If you'll just step this way..."

Teraf somehow found himself facing a battery of lenses while the banter common to newspapermen the universe over, was tossed back and forth. "Have a rough crossing?" demanded one. "How's it feel to brush a comet's tail?"

"It never touched us," the prince laughed that one off.

"Do you think the comet will hit the earth?" chirped another reporter. "We understand..."

"You'll have to ask the captain that one," parried Teraf.

"Do you think Terran girls are prettier than..."

Hermes finally rescued the perspiring prince and returned him to the fidgeting reception committee, after exacting a promise for an exclusive interview.

UNDER THE wing of the fussy little doctor, the new arrival was hustled down a landing dock elevator and into the official car. Between polite comments to members of his escort as the car glided along its repulsion rails into the heart of the city, Teraf had time to survey the town. The ten years of his sojourn on Mars had made little appreciable change. Atlan still looked like the prosperous colonial capital it was, but the buildings of white marble were smaller and the streets narrower than he remembered them.

Also, the sprinkling of red-haired, tall and deep-chested Martians seemed almost lost in the press of blond Hellenes, dark-skinned Arabs and bearded Northmen which filled the sidewalks.

Teraf was especially struck by the appearance of the transplanted Martians and compared them unfavorably with the pale, graceful citizens back "home", as the red planet was always called. The rays of the earthly sun had burned their sensitive skins almost as black as those of the Nubians who occasionally wended their way through the crowds. And to meet the stress of Terran gravitation they had developed enormous muscles which sat poorly on their slender frames and gave them the deceitful appearance of strong men in a circus. In other words, they didn't quite fit.

The Alphas—those of mixed Martian and earthly parentage—apparently had absorbed the best traits of both races, he observed, tingling with pride because he was one of the latter. These Alphas, of whom there were a great number on the streets, had the blazing hair and slim grace of their Martian forebears, plus a better adaptation to earthly conditions.



The Crooked Mountain, on which the Pitar's palace was located, now loomed before them like a nightcap dropped on the plain. The silver trac-

ery of Bab El radio tower graced its summit like a spider's web—creamy structures in which beat the official heart of Atlantis peeped from amidst its olive groves.

As the car skimmed a bridge which spanned the second of the city's five circular canals, the prince caught sight of the race-course which was the pride of Atlan. The results of races there were even flashed to Mars; he had bet on them many a time.

Crossing another bridge, they swept into the business section with its colorful shops, block-square combines and squat, windowless warehouses. In the latter, he knew, were stored the priceless cargoes of merchandise which dropped upon Atlan from all corners of the earth for trans-shipment "home."

The fourth circle, which housed the barracks and parade grounds of the army, was not in that state of activity which characterized the rest of the city. The frowning marble fortresses, armed with their squat infra-heat guns, seemed almost deserted. Only a few guards loitered about the approaches to the last bridge.

A three-minute glide through carefully-tended parkland brought them to the Inner Island and to the pillared facade of the patraichal palace, from which Zeus ruled the world and conversed with the stars. Here there were soldiers in plenty, standing stiffly at attention in long lines at either side of the entrance. Through this lane of honor, Vanya and his fellows proudly escorted the prince into the reception hall.

Teraf's nose wrinkled a little at this ostentation. *That's what comes of having an ambitious, stupid wife, he reflected, comparing the almost barbaric splendor of the chamber with the simple dignity of similar rooms at Minos, capital of the Martian Anarchiate. Zeus must be coming more and more under Hera's influence. Time for a young man to take over the Pitarship if I know anything about it.*

But the prince's attitude changed somewhat when he saw that, except for a few officials who were passing busily back and forth, the reception room was empty. He was to be let off without a formal welcome then? He wondered.

WITH A FLOURISH, Dr. Vanya ushered him into the Pitar's private chamber and withdrew wistfully, leaving Teraf alone with the mighty Zeus himself. The Pitar was swathed in a toga of sky-blue silk and had his bad foot propped upon a padded stool. His secretary, a strikingly handsome youth, assisted him to arise when the visitor was announced.

"Welcome home, Teraf," the governor of Atlantis smiled through his bushy red beard as he limped forward with outstretched hands. "Remembering how you used to hate court occasions, I begged off this morning on account of my foot."

"Your gout is worse, then?" asked the prince to make conversation.

"It's damned painful. Wish I could get a leave of absence and go home for a while. This damp climate is killing me... Apollo, get us a flagon of nectar, like a good boy."

As the secretary withdrew, Zeus slipped him arm around his visitor's shoulders and led him to a window-seat which overlooked the capital and the distance-misted mountains of Crete. The Pitar sank into the cushions with a grunt of relief and, picking up the jagged sceptre which was the symbol of his power, began tracing complicated patterns with it on the rug.

"You'll stay in your old room at the palace, of course," he said at last. "Glad you arrived in time to attend the reception and conclave of the ten governors of Atlantis tonight. The old summer solstice rigmarole—but I still have to give the barbarians pomp and circumstance, auguries and tokens,

ambrosia and horseraces or they become grumpy.

"That's really why I humor Hera when she wants to give a reception, you know; she thinks such things are necessary and she should know. At heart she's a barb..." He stopped himself with a slight cough. "You'll not have to sit beside the altar to-night—unless that brother of yours fails to show up—so you can get away early.

"How are things back home?" Zeus changed the subject after a pause. There was wistfulness in his mellow bass voice.

"Just about the same," replied the prince, who was regaining that sense of ease with which, in his youth, he had conversed with his strange paradox of a Pitar, whose cleancut mouth was always ready to smile at a friend and whose bright little eyes could sparkle equally at a jest or the sight of a pretty woman.

"They're running a new canal from the South Pole to the Equator," Teraf continued. "I suppose you've read of it in the dispatches. Half a mile wide. It will use every drop of water from the ice cap. I worked on it all this year getting my engineering degree."

Zeus nodded, though his eyes were fastened anxiously on the window and the slowly clearing skies.

"It's a continual fight all the time. Everybody's on food and water rations now. Chemical food, mostly. Brrrr! And Earth may be damp, but you should be glad you're down here where one doesn't have to send in a requisition in order to take a bath."

"Yes, life up there is a struggle," the Pitar admitted, "but it's no picnic down here either just now. We could use twice as many immigrants if they could be spared from the canal building. We're terribly short of soldiers, too—just when the natives are all worked up about this comet business. They think it's a portent. Someone—I don't know who—yet," his jaw tightened and he gave the rug a vi-

scious jab, "is trying to use their fear to break down confidence in the government. There's even talk of a revolution..."

"Nonsense," laughed Teraf, wondering suddenly if the old man was entering his dotage. "I'm sure..."

"I suppose," interrupted the Pitar, that observers on the *Pasidon* were watching the comet. What did they make of it?"



"Had them worried for a while." Teraf took one of the glasses of nectar which Apollo returned to proffer at that moment. "If we had been delayed, we might have been hit, you know; the comet is cutting right between the orbits of Mars and Earth. The ship set a new speed record on account of it. Three weeks and two days. Not bad for 90,000,000 miles."

ZEUS NEGLECTED his own drink to peer out through the window from which the new celestial body could now be seen rising over the horizon. Its ruddy light was clearly visible, despite the fact that the sun was almost at the zenith. "Did the observers think there was any danger either to Earth or Mars?"

"They didn't think so. The comet has a considerable body of solid material in the head; in fact, it's about the size and density of Earth. But it should miss us by some 17,000,000 miles; at that distance it can only disturb the tides and perhaps alter our orbit a very little."

"Well if that's all," sighed the Pitar, "maybe there'll be no trouble." He gulped his drink and held out his glass for another. "Perhaps I shouldn't tell you this," he continued after waving his secretary away, "but

as next in line for the throne of Hellas, I think you ought to know." His widely-spaced grey eyes looked into Teraf's blue ones for a long moment.

"We're sitting on top of a volcano, my boy," he said at last. "I have made the mistake of thinking that Earthlings would appreciate the benefits they receive from our rule—better living conditions, education, longer life, no wars.

"Instead, they are a bunch of ungrateful brutes." His voice was bitter. "Excuse me—I know you're half Earthling—but I believe you can be trusted. As for your brother Refo—I don't know. I don't know." The Pitar brought himself up with a start.

"Enough of this," he grumbled, starting to rise and then subsiding with a groan as his foot protested. "You must want a bath in some of that water you feel so strongly toward. Just be sure you're on hand for the conclave, and keep your eyes and ears open. The ten governors should all be there. Your brother is flying in from Athens... why he couldn't have been here to greet you I don't know."

He touched a bell; Apollo returned and helped his master to arise. Zeus then escorted his guest to the door and turned him over to Vanya, who still hovered outside.

DEEP IN thought over what he had just heard, Teraf trudged slowly through the gracious, softly-illuminated halls. Things were not the same as when he had left Atlantis. He sighed and became conscious of the earth's gravitational pull.

It was the old story, he reflected; the same thing that had got Martians in trouble so many times before—assuming that half-savages were moved by the same high principles as themselves. He had read in history books of the first tragic attempt to colonize Earth, thousands of years before. And then there was the fiasco on Venus. Were the Martians too soft?

Too generous? Would they be left to smother gallantly on their little planet in the end? He thrust out his chin and straddled Dr. Vanya by swearing that it would not be so this time if he could help it.

When they reached the well-remembered high carved door in the east wing, Vanya was all for coming in and making his prince comfortable with his own hands; Teraf succeeded in shooing him away and entered his room alone.

The apartment was vast, yet simple, and to his taste. He had often stayed there when, with his tall, silent father, he had paid his first visits to the capital. Teraf was startled out of his reverie by a voice issuing from a chair which had been drawn up before one of the windows. "Come in, prince," it said, "and make yourself at home, same as I have."

Reclining on the small of his back, with his feet on the window sill, a glass of nectar in one hand and a slice of ambrosia in the other was Hermes, he of the *Evening Planet*. His smile was so infectious that Teraf found his somber humor lightening. It was impossible to be annoyed with this grinning, freckled intruder.

"I'd get up and tap my eyebrows if I were a gentleman," grumbled the reporter as he squinted at the prince, judging and weighing him through his mockery. "However, there are too many gentlemen in this dump as it is. Wipe the grime of space off your face and then pull up a chair; I want to talk."

A valet, who had been lurking in the background, now led the way to the bedroom where clean harness had been laid out and a bath drawn.

Returning half an hour later, Teraf found his guest apparently in deep slumber, the empty goblet dangling from his long fingers. But it was not so.

"You are now a credit to Atlan," Hermes declared, surveying through

one half-closed eye the trim figure in linen trunks, loose shirt and sandals which confronted him. "Pardon my rudeness again. I've been working day and night on this comet story until I'm asleep on my feet. Besides, I'm half-shot on your nectar." He pulled himself three vertebrae higher in the chair.

Teraf ordered more wine while, with the ease of a star newsman, Hermes led the conversation into devious channels: What were the prince's impressions of Mars after ten years there? Was he returning to Hellas at once? What did he hope to accomplish in that godforsaken place with his civil engineering? What did he think of the comet? Was he planning to marry? And finally, what were his impressions of Earth after such a long absence?

To the latter question Teraf replied that he could make no answer other than to comment upon the increased number of barbarians on the streets of Atlan.

"That's just the point," exclaimed Hermes, suddenly vibrating with excitement. "That's my lead; that's just what I wanted you to say. Look! Atlan used to be a Martian city; old Poseidon laid it out after he conquered Atlantis, in a manner which made it impregnable. Five moats encircling the town... fortresses... all that. He knew a thing or two about colonization, that boy. Then he had to go and get himself killed when a mere infant... 125 years old, wasn't he? And they went and picked Zeus to succeed him.

"NOW ZEUS is all right," the chronicler hastened to add, "but he trusts everybody. He has turned the army into an engineering corps, planted colonies all over the map and let the barbarians pour in here from every direction. We Martians are becoming as scarce as saber-tooth tigers.

"Great Land of Nod!" Hermes was sitting bolt upright now. "I've been traveling around this town getting the reaction on the comet. The place is a regular hotbed of rebellion; the Gauls and Britons, who were brought here to work in the factories, are aching for loot. You should see their hungry eyes when they pass a shop... or a pretty girl."

Hermes poured himself another glass of nectar and continued his monologue in a slightly-thickening voice. "You can't transform a savage into a civilized human being in a century, prince," he wagged his burnished head gravely. "You've got to hammer the tar out of him until he becomes afraid to turn pirate every time your back is to him. The Pitar is too easy; he thinks too much of Martian's burthen, and not enough of the Martian's scalp."

"Wait a minute," Teraf broke in; "are you arguing that we enslave these people?"

"Don't hand me that stuff; every colonial people is enslaved. What do you think we have colonies on Earth for? They pay off in good hard cash. With all our fine words, the barbarians know they're being taken for a sleighride and they don't like it. They live better than they ever did before, but we clean up. See?"

"Well..." This viewpoint was new to Teraf.

"Athena and General Ares are the only two people here—except me, maybe—who have the right idea," Hermes continued belligerently. "They want to pull in the outposts until we have consolidated our position in Atlantis itself, and bring reinforcements from home—even if we have to kidnap them. But would Zeus give up a single colony? He would like..." Hermes choked, glanced at his timepiece and jumped to his feet, apparently cold sober.

"Great Land of Nod," he cried. "I've only got an hour to catch the last edition. See you later, Prin..."

Prince." The journalist dashed for the door, then turned back to add sheepishly, "That nectar must have been potent; I have no business talking like this about the powers that... especially to one of them. Consider my extreme depravity and forget about it, will you? But keep your eyes and ears open tonight."

And with that repudiation of the Pitar's advice he was gone.



Where today roll the blue waters of the Mediterranean there must once have been great areas of land, and land with a very agreeable climate. This was probably the case during the last Glacial Age and we do not know how near it was to our times when the change occurred that brought back the ocean waters into the Mediterranean. ...The people of the Mediterranean race may have gone far toward the beginnings of settlement and civilisation in that great lost Mediterranean valley.

H.G. Wells, Outline of History.

TERAF THREW himself on a pile of cushions when the reporter had departed, deciding to catch a few hours sleep before the conclave, which he remembered, was an all-night affair. For a time he mulled over the things which Zeus and Hermes had told him but at last he sank into a slumber filled with rebellious comets and pigtailed barbarians who tried to gore him with the ox-horns on their helmets. He was awakened by the valet, who brought him the blue silk ceremonial robe which rulers of Atlantis wore on this momentous night.

The prince had an odd feeling of unreality as he entered the pillared reception hall, still adjusting the folds of his clumsy garment. The setting

sun was casting long shadows through the western porticos of the chamber, but, through the opposite windows poured the ghastly light of the comet. The two sets of shadows wrestled across the marble floors. This unpleasant sight must have been noticed by others for, at that moment, the palace lights were switched on; their glow vanquished the shadows and brought back the world of every day.

Already the reception was under way. It resembled nothing else in the universe... except perhaps another reception planned by Pitaress Hera of Atlan.

The rulers of Atlantis—that is, members of the colonial court and the ten kings of the Mediterranean provinces and their entourages—were there, all clothed in blue. Guests in the openwork metal trappings of Mars, the short tunics of the Hellenes and Etruscans, the rough woollens of the Celts, and the violently-clashing dyed linens of the Egyptians were there, also. These latter had come to offer suggestions, present claims or make complaints at the conclave; many appeared ill-at-ease in the splendor of the marble hall.

Remembering the advice of Hermes, Teraf observed numerous barbarians casting covetous glances at the tapestries, the golden goblets and the jewels which adorned the robes of the women present. After his years on



the empty deserts of Mars, the prince felt out of place in the crowded, noisy room. Outside it was not much better, however. Food and drink were being lavished in the many dining rooms; the palace groves were melodious with orchestras and solitary musicians. Only in the outer reaches of the

grounds was there comparative peace—even here the comet-shine seemed an ever-present menace.

Dr. Vanya finally located the prince and dragged him back to the hall where Zeus and Hera, seated upon twin golden thrones, now welcomed the multitude.

The Pitar's face was twisted with pain but he was obviously trying to play up to his wife, a short, black-haired woman who once had been considered the greatest beauty of the countryside; now, under the influence of good living and power, she had waxed heavy about the hips and mouth.

Holding the zig-zag sceptre stiffly upright, his handsome face smiling down at his guests, the Pitar seemed a personification of power and kingliness. Occasionally he forgot his aching foot when his eyes happened to light upon the beauty of some barbarian girl.

Once again, Teraf made the acquaintance of all that splendid hierarchy; finally Hera beamed upon him as he knelt before the thrones and patted his hand in a motherly fashion when he stood up after the customary pledge of allegiance.

Athena, the Pitar's elder daughter, then slipped her arm through his and led him along the mazes of the palace while they talked of old times. Athena was a tall, finely-chiseled woman, whose creamy red skin was set off startlingly by the premature whiteness of her hair. Teraf knew her well. As secretary of colonies, she had always paid special attention to Hellas, and had done more to civilize his native land by her gentle persuasion than all the schoolteachers and soldiers provided by the Pitar.

"I want to have a serious talk with you, prince," she had said as soon as she met him. But thereafter their conversation remained confined to reminiscences. Athena appeared ill-at-ease and hesitant, as though she could not

bring herself to broach the subject nearest her heart.

DURING their walk they met General Ares, a frustrated, quiet man whose bleached eyes held a devil. Ares had little use for Alphas and merely barked a greeting at Teraf before hurrying over to Vulcan, the crippled engineer in charge of the power-broadcasting Tower of Bab El. The two were joined by Heracles, the hulking builder of the great dam which held the rising waters of the Atlantic out of the low-lying Mediterranean basin. They moved toward a portico and stood gesturing and pointing upward at the comet.

"Our long-tailed visitor seems to have the old boys all stirred up," Teraf commented idly.

"That's what I've been wanting to talk to you about," began Athena. "I believe I can trust you..."

She was interrupted by a soft, throaty laugh. It came from Aphrodite, youngest daughter of the Pitar, who hurried up, jewelled hands outstretched to the prince. "Oh Teraf," she exclaimed, prettily out of breath, "father gave me a message to deliver to you alone. You'll excuse us, Sis." She smiled rather condescendingly at Athena. "I'll return him in a few minutes."

With characteristic playful arrogance she carried him off to a quiet bower. Aphrodite, Teraf had to admit as he looked down at her bronzed oval face, was one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen on Earth or Mars. She was small but exquisitely-formed and she made the best of her charms by wearing a short blue robe which clasped with a pearl brooch on one shoulder, leaving a rounded breast bare and but slightly concealing the long line of her thighs.

It was of Aphrodite that the poets sang that she had been born of the sea foam. Yet, despite her allure, Teraf had the discourteous thought that, through years of keeping up her rep-

utation as the court's queen of love, she was becoming a bit too voluptuous to merit that characterization.

"There is no message," she laughed when they were alone. "I just wanted to talk with you and I can't bear Athena any more; she thinks too much.

"Tell me about yourself since last I saw you," she rattled on as she drew him down on a bench decorated with carvings of the gods of ancient Atlas. "For years I've been dying to go home, but father won't hear of it. He says there's too much work to be done here.

"But I hate it!" Suddenly her green eyes gleamed at him like those of a cat. "I dream of the courts of Minos and the other fair cities of Mars which I have never seen. Instead, I have to put up with these filthy earthlings and the heat and the work... work... work. No one has time to play... with me." The last words were a whisper and an invitation. Almost with astonishment he found that he was holding her in his arms and kissing away her tears.

At last he took her soft little hand and told of Mars as she liked to believe it was. He failed to mention the icy nights; the thin, piercing air which cut like a razor into the lungs of an Alpha; the horror of ever-encroaching deserts and the struggle for existence which made life on earth a paradise by comparison.

She listened, almost purring with enjoyment. But, although his heart fluttered under the gaze of those great, glowing eyes, Teraf could not resist an inward grin at the memory of how he had painted the same beautiful picture of Earth for a bored Martian girl, six weeks ago.

THEIR TETE-A-TETE was interrupted by a fanfare of trumpets from the hall; they hurried inside just as the crowd parted to admit a tall, black-haired man in the travelling tunic of a Helena.

Leaving Aphrodite with a word of apology, Teraf hurried forward to greet his elder brother, King Refo. The latter saw him coming and halted in the center of the hall. They gripped hands. "Sorry I couldn't meet you when you arrived," said Refo, the warmth of his dark eyes belying his almost expressionless face, "but great things are brewing in Athens. I'll talk of that later; but now I suppose I must pay my respects to His Ineffable Magnificence. Let's get it over with."

Arm in arm the brothers—so oddly different in type—approached the Pitar's throne. Refo was tall and gave the effect of blackness, like a thunderstorm in the distance; his aquiline face permitted no advances. His Martian father had given nothing to his son except a brilliant mind.

On the other hand, Teraf was pure Martian to all outward appearance. . . burnished hair, copper skin, extreme height, almost abnormally-wide shoulders and the carriage of a wire-walker. But his happy-go-lucky nature was a gift from the gay little Achaean shepherdess who had bewitched his father when the latter was sent by Poseidon to colonize Hellas.

Zeus greeted the newcomer without the warmth which Teraf had expected; both men merely bowed with fingertips to forehead and exchanged a few formal phrases. Teraf felt a chill over the room and behind his back he knew the guests were whispering.

The tension was broken by another fanfare announcing the arrival of Plu Toh Ra, Pharaoh of the Egyptian province, with his daughter and heir, Pan Doh Ra.

Teraf drew in his breath sharply at the appearance of this couple. Plu Toh Ra was a veritable giant, all of seven feet tall and proportionately broad. His hawk-like face and hypnotic eyes gave an impression of ruthless strength. His features were fine, though the effect was somewhat spoiled by the fact that the bones of his face

were clearly visible beneath the swarthy skin. His slanted eyes, black as midnight, wandered slowly over the crowd and Teraf noticed that there were few who could meet that glance.

The prince remembered strange tales of the power which the Pharaoh held over his millions of subjects. No Martian nor Altha he; the Egyptian boasted that his ancestry traced back to Ra, the sun god himself, and that he paid fealty to the Martians only so long as he benefited thereby. Educated on Mars after his father had bowed to the inevitable during the first years of the Martian conquest, the Pharaoh had returned unchanged to build up an empire within an empire. It was even whispered that he dreamed of some day being the first barbarian Pitar of Atlantis.

Tearing his eyes away from that dominant figure in its sweeping, violently-colored linen robes, Teraf turned them on the daughter. The difference between the two was startling: the Helene vaguely recalled that Plu Toh Ra had married a Martian girl, but he was not prepared for what he saw. Pan Doh Ra, aptly named "A gift from all the gods" was slim and lithe, like a young panther, and her garment was, in fact, fashioned out of a panther's skin. Her eyes were twin pools of darkness which contrasted strangely with her hair which was a sort of golden-black. Yet this intensity of coloring did not make her resemble in the slightest her cloud-burst of a father.

She was, Teraf decided, merely a playful panther kitten, bewildered by being led through some thunderous procession. She should have been sunning herself by some cool stream. What would she become under the domination of such a father? He shivered.

Teraf and his brother still were standing before the dias when the Egyptians were escorted forward. The former thought he saw a quick glance

of understanding pass between the two older men.

"Greetings, Pitar," said the Egyptian. "You seem worn by the cares of your high office tonight."

"Greetings, Pharaoh," was the equally sardonic reply. "Take care, or your own high office may become a bit wearing also."

The king of Hellas then introduced Plu Toh Ra to his brother and concluded the ceremony by leading the girl to the foot of the twin thrones. "This, oh Pitar, is my betrothed, the Princess of Sais," he said proudly while Pan Doh Ra blushed.

"Not bad. Not bad," purred Zeus and then tried not to jump as Hera pinched him. "We give you our Pitaric blessing."

As Refo led the girl away while the crowd cheered, Pan Doh Ra smiled up at Teraf. Rather, it seemed, she grimaced pitifully as though her heart were not gay. *Poor panther kitten*, he found himself thinking, then wondered why such a silly idea should cross his mind.



...the people were gathered together every fifth and every sixth year alternately, thus giving equal honour to the odd and the even number. And when they were gathered together they consulted about public affairs and enquired if any one had transgressed in anything, and passed judgment on him accordingly, and...when darkness came on and the fire about the sacrifice was cool, all of them put on most beautiful azure robes, and, sitting on the ground, at night, near the embers of the sacrifices over which they had sworn, and extinguishing all the fire about the temple, they received and gave judgment...

Plato's Critias.

THE ARRIVAL of the Egyptians brought the reception to an end and marked the beginning of ceremonies incident to the conclave proper. Amid a blare of music, Zeus limped from his throne, entered a sedan chair and took his place at the head of a procession formed by members of his court, the ten kings and their resplendant retinues. The little column was followed by the sacred white bull, which was to be sacrificed on the altars of the ancient Titan deities, Gaea and Uranus, in the sacred grove of the Gaic Oracle.

Tradition had it that this was the thousand-and-second such procession to the shrine. According to old stories Gaea and Uranus were founders of the race of Titans which had ruled Atlantis before the coming of the Martians. Even now, original inhabitants of the Mediterranean basin were known as Titans and still boasted of their high ancestry.

The invaders from the red planet, realizing the grip of the old sun and earth worship, had not endeavored to stamp it out; rather they had made use of its festivals and customs for their own purposes. Thus, although the old rituals were retained, the conclave—which had once been a purely religious gathering of the ten independent kings of Atlantis—now had become a conference of governors, where problems of trade, education, etc., were discussed.

The oracle of Gaea, a cleft in the floor of a deep cave through which issued gas that, in the old time, was supposed to make the priestesses see visions and issue cryptic advice, had been closed by order of the Martians, who felt it to be a menace to their regime. A high iron fence had been built around the cave, and no one was allowed to enter, even during the conclave.

To the rhythm of devotional music played by both old-fashioned stringed instruments and hidden loudspeakers, the procession moved slowly out of the

hall and up the mountain. Ignoring the cable-cars which connected the palace with Bab El, the participants walked in pairs, flanked by torchbearers. The two lines of dancing lights usually could be seen in all parts of the city, and were the signal for public prayers. On this occasion, however, the effect was spoiled by the light of the comet, which cast its sickly glow over the landscape and made the torchlight impotent.



Teraf walked beside his brother, who had slipped a blue robe over his travel-stained clothing; just behind them were the Egyptians. Although the other kings were surrounded by many advisers, the two Hellenes were unattended, as were the Pharaoh and his daughter. This was explained by the fact that the others had arrived in Atlan many days before to take advantage of the city's hospitality.

The King of Hellas was in a bad humor. At first he walked in silence. Then, as the way became steeper and the procession lengthened, he burst forth angrily: "It's a shame; this is but a shell of our old religion. The red men are mocking us. In the old days the free kings of Atlantis came here to worship their Gods; now we puppets come to discuss tin imports from Britain."

"And in the old days those hungry, skin-clad kings parted to start new wars against each other," Teraf could not help interposing.

REFO SNAPPED, "Have your years away from home made a weakling of you? Of course those old kings made war. War is the highest form of human activity; it tempers the will of the people. They lived hard and died

gloriously; that was the Golden Age. Now even their oracle is defiled."

"Aye," boomed the mellow voice of the Egyptian from behind them. "Refo is right. Today we build factories, till the soil, fly through the air and... get fat. But some day the Celts, who despise us, will sweep over this land like a swarm of locusts! Hmmm." His callous face split in a smile. "Not a bad phrase, that: 'Like a swarm of locusts'."

"But the Martians have a superior culture," Teraf protested. "They have advanced Terra a thousand years since they came and neither Celts nor Titans can stand against their weapons."

"There speaks the Alpha," sneered the Egyptian. "A true Titan would be planning ways to re-establish his kingdom. Why, one bold stroke could wreck the Tower of Bab El, cripple all their motive power and..."

He felt the amazed eyes of the younger Hellene upon him and stopped short.

"We may count on you, Teraf, if trouble comes?" Refo burst out anxiously when the silence had become strained. "You'll support any struggle for liberty, won't you?"

"Say, what is this?" snapped the prince. "You may count on me to back Zeus to the limit. Brother or no brother, I advise you to say or do nothing further; as for you, Egyptian crawl back into your mummy-case."

Plu Toh Ra's yellow teeth showed in a bleak smile for an instant. Then he dropped back beside his daughter and, without another word they resumed the long climb. A quarter of an hour later they arrived at the valley of the oracle, a circular glade high up on Crooked Mountain and open to the view of the city beneath.

Great fires were lighted on the Altars of Heaven and Earth. The bull was slaughtered with many incantations by several priests in long white robes. (Teraf remembered having seen several of those same priests working

as gardeners about the palace in a more prosaic garb). Then the carcass of the animal was quartered and hung above the fires to roast. Until the barbecue would be finished, Zeus, ten members of his own court and the ten kings sat on the ground in a semi-circle and talked about matters of state.

Since Refo occupied the seat allotted to Hellas, Teraf wandered into the forest, trying to consolidate the many things he had learned since his arrival. It began to look to him as if the long rest he had earned during his years of furious study on Mars would not be forthcoming.

All about him, minor officials of the governing classes were building bonfires near which they would dice or play cards until the rising sun put an end to the conclave and the carcass of the bull would be cut down and distributed for a morning feast before the return to Olympus Palace.

Heedless of where he was going, Teraf stumbled on Hermes' warning; the coldness between his brother and the Pitar; the strange glance of understanding between Refo and the Egyptian, and lastly, the cryptic words while they were climbing the mountain all seemed to merit careful thought.

At one turning he came across the fence which barred entrance to the cave of the oracle. He skirted its sinister bars and turned at last to rejoin one of the groups seated about the friendly little fires. But he had taken only a few steps when he leaped backward, heart pounding and hands scrabbling at the entangling rope in search of sword hilt or heat pistol.

Before him, limned in the shadows, was crouching a nightmare—a five-foot-long, horse-like head armed with a double row of teeth, and surmounted by a tall horn or crest was darting at him on its thin, leathery neck. The thing had the body and wings of a bat, a thousand times enlarged.

Pterodactyl! flashed through the prince's mind as he managed to get his dress-sword free. *I'm done for!*

THE CREATURE made no move toward Teraf, though it rustled folded, parchment-like wing in an ecstasy of fury and hissed like escaping steam. The prince was tempted to run, but his curiosity finally got the better of him; he approached carefully, to discover that the flying reptile was fettered with chains which hobbled its feet and passed over its wings.

He had completely circled the pterodactyl—first of the vanishing breed that he had ever seen alive—when a soft voice spoke at his elbow:

"Don't be annoying Sonny. He never could abide strangers."

Teraf whirled, sword still in hand, to find Pan Doh Ra smiling at him out of the shadows.

"Is...ls that delirium tremen yours?" he gasped.

"Certainly." The girl came forward and caressed the gibbering creature's head as though it had been that of a favorite horse. "The Pharaoh won't ride in an airplane unless it's absolutely necessary; says they're effete. He prefers to fly on the back of one of his own birds."

"You mean you have more of these outlandish creatures."

"Oh my, yes; we have a whole flock of them at Sais. Of course, Sonny is the fastest and strongest of the lot. Want to pet him? He's quite calm now, aren't you Sonny?"

Teraf felt no call to caress the brute, yet he didn't want to show his aversion. Sheathing the silly sword, he stepped forward and ran his fingers over Sonny's bony head and around its mouse-like ears. The pterodactyl now seemed assured of the friendliness of its disturber and purred like a cat.

"I'm the only one who can manage him," the girl said proudly. "The Pharaoh was in a hurry to get here, so he took Sonny and had to bring me along to take care of him."

"But why didn't you land at the palace dock, instead of 'way up here?"

She shrugged her slim shoulders and silently continued patting the reptile.

"They'll not be wanting us at the conclave until dawn," Teraf made another try. "Let's build a fire here and talk."

"I shouldn't; the Pharaoh wouldn't like it." But she made no further complaint when he struck a light.

For a while they stared at each other in awkward silence until Teraf half-regretted his impulse to become acquainted with this wild creature. Unconsciously, she had dropped into the conventionalized sitting posture of the Egyptians, legs crossed and hands on knees...like a living sphinx, he thought.

OUT OF THE corner of his eye, Teraf watched the graceful, repressed little figure crouched beside the blaze in her outlandish short skirt and breast-cloth of panther-hide. She did not seem anxious to talk...seemed almost to have forgotten him and to be seated on a lotus leaf in contemplation. Pretty knees she had!

"I must congratulate you on your betrothal to my brother," he said formally when he became conscious that thoughts were leading him astray. "He's splendid."

She crossed her arms, placing one hand on each shoulder. (Another damned conventionalized attitude, the prince fumed. *Nice hands, though, with tapering fingers.*)

"...a splendid person," he repeated in panic.

"Is he?" she asked simply. "It was the Pharaoh's wish." (This came as an afterthought.)

"Then you don't care for Refo?" Teraf bristled slightly.

"Oh, he's all right...but he can't laugh." The answer was almost a sigh. Charming contralto voice she had.

"I didn't think you...your countrymen had much use for laughter."

"They haven't; that's why I hate them so." There was a light in her eyes which was not a reflection from the fire. "But I learned to laugh in Mino...and I can't quite forget."

"You were educated on Mars!" Somehow the idea that this sphinx-faced beauty had not lived all her life among the pillars and pyramids of Sais came as a shock. But her statement awakened a bond of sympathy between them and their conversation lost its strained character. They had mutual friends on the home planet. Both remembered the stark beauty of the deserts and the mad, gay battle for existence.

For an hour they chatted, while Pan Doh Ra lost her conventionalized manners and became just a laughing, carefree girl. Finally he told her of the oracle's cave and she expressed a burning desire to explore it. They succeeded in finding the gate at last, but it was locked, and rusted fast as well.

Without a word Pan Doh Ra ran back to Sonny, released the hobbles on his feet and brought him back on leash like a dog. "Open it," she commanded, shaking the gate vigorously. The beast cocked its horned head thoughtfully, then hooked its skinny claws into the ironwork and surged back with a great flapping of wings. The lock snapped and they were inside.

"Good boy," crooned the princess, readjusting the hobbles as her pet nibbled a lump of sugar. "Let's go, and Isis take the hindmost, as the Pharaoh would say."

They found a pile of half-rotted torches inside the cave-mouth and, lighting two of them, paced down the sandy floor between rows of stalagmites and stalactytes which rose like curtains of silver and jewels on either side of the passage.

"I've heard the gas is dangerous," Teraf whispered, awed despite himself as the cavern opened out like a cathedral before them.

"I stopped breathing long ago," his companion giggled in an attempt at nonchalance. "I'm scared stiff but I wouldn't admit it."

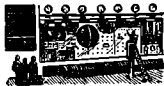
They tiptoed through the whispering silence until a patch of light caught

their attention. It was a hole in the cliff wall through which the comet-shine streamed. In the floor of the cave was a corresponding fissure and from it issued a grey thread of gas.

"Let's just sniff it," she suggested as they approached through a double circle of rough hewn altars. "Maybe we'll see Gaea and Uranus themselves."

"Not on your life."

Teraf gripped her arm. But his precaution was useless; at that moment the volume of gas increased. It gushed from the chasm and filled the whole cave with vapors which eddied along the low ceiling like ghosts.



The Hellene started to drag the girl toward the entrance as a sweetfish-acrid odor bit into his nostrils. But a lassitude seized him; his knees sagged. He found Mensef lying on the sandy floor with Pan Doh Ra beside him.

FOR A MOMENT, Teraf was badly frightened; then a sense of well-being drove out the fear. At the same time the cave seemed to expand until it took in the universe. The beat of his heart assumed a slower and slower tempo until each throb was like the measured thud of a sledge-hammer.

"How do you feel?" he asked the princess, after he realized that it would take them at least a thousand years to walk to the entrance of the cave.

"Lovely," she purred, stretching voluptuously. "Wanna stay here forever?" On his hyper-sensitized mind the words came minutes apart.

For a time they were silent, then. In the plane to which the gaseous drug had lifted them, centuries passed

and generations were born and died. Then, in a calm, detached voice, Pan Doh Ra began talking as though at the prompting of an invisible psychiatrist.

For a time she spoke of her repressed childhood among the priest-ridden people of the Nile; of religious processions and rituals which made up most of the life at court; of sweaty caravans returning across the deserts from far places; of the aching sunlight and the choking duststorms.

As she talked, pictures swam before Teraf's eyes, as though he actually were witnessing the scenes she described. The grey billows of gas took form and color so that he watched the passing of the snorting camels and helped beak-nosed, priests perform rites among their monoliths.

Then the princess told of her few happy years on Mars where, through pressure brought on the Pharaoh by Zeus, she had been sent to be educated. And again, across the back of the cave, colors ebbed and flowed, revealing the fairy skylines of Martian cities, gay school scenes, jaunts into red wastes which had been waterless for a million years; friends made, and the gradual unfolding of a girl's vivid personality.

Next came the return to Saïs; to the barbarous, oppressive yellow and black palace. Pan Doh Ra's hand clutched that of her companion tightly as she related how Plu Toh Ra, now completely under the domination of the Seraphist priesthood, had crushed her back into the old routine.

She was allowed but one recreation—and that only because she was a master at it. She trained the serpent-birds, last of their breed, which the Egyptians had half-domesticated ages before and kept in a den under the palace, ready for use as terrible engines of destruction.

Pan Doh Ra had a strange power over those nightmarish survivals; they would follow her like dogs, though with other persons—even those who occasionally rode on their backs—

they were ferocious and intractable.

"I tamed Sonny myself," she boasted. "He's the largest and swiftest of the brood. But he had a devil; still has. Once he killed three of his keepers."

SHE DROOPED and was silent for a long while, her wide eyes fixed on the column of gas bubbling from the floor. Teraf vaguely sensed her thoughts...her loneliness and misery floated like antic shapes across the mist. "How did you meet my brother," he ventured at last.

"Oh, the Pharaoh gave me to him as the price of Hellas' allegiance." Her voice had gone flat. "I know now that we're going to die here, so I might as well tell you everything."

"Gave you? Allegiance?"

"Of course. But Refo loves me as much as such a man can love a woman, I suppose. Last year he came to Sais on a visit of state and saw me; he begged the Pharaoh for my hand. Plu Toh Ra saw an opportunity to gain a powerful convert to his crusade. I was the price. He didn't have to do much persuading; Refo had always longed to bring back what he calls the Golden Age."

"Then it's war?" whispered Teraf. "But that's ridiculous; in six months half a million soldiers could be sent from Minos to Atlan."

"But in six weeks Atlan may be but a memory if...my father loves to go around, muttering 'thy days are numbered!'" The girl threw out one slim arm to steady herself, then sank slowly to the floor.

With a desperate effort Teraf rallied his will power. What had they been doing, sitting here like two opium eaters? He managed to stagger to his feet. But to lift the girl was beyond his waning strength; he fell across her unconscious body, then, gripping her shoulders, tried to drag her away from the fissure.

He made some progress, but, as he crept past the leering Titan altars, his lungs drawing in great draughts

of the gas, the cave expanded until it reached the very stars, and the floor stretched endlessly before him. Finally he ceased his efforts.

Eons later he had a vision. A giant, its face covered with cloth, strode through the mists, taking one step every hundred years. Its voice boomed like the tolling of a bell, "Great... Land...of Nod. Thought there... was ... a ... story ... in ... that...broken...gate. Hup there! Come...with...papa!"

Teraf's senses swayed into darkness.



Which shaketh the earth out of her place and the pillars thereof tremble.

Job, 8-6

TERAF AWOKE in his room to meet the questioning eyes of Dr. Vanya. "What...?" How...?" he stammered, sitting up quickly and lying down just as suddenly.

With a look that spoke volumes, Vanya handed him a copy of the *Evening Planet*. Even stories of the comet's approach and of the conclave had been subordinated to a scarehead which read:

Planet Chronieler
Saves Prince & Princess.
Curse of Gaelic Oracle
Falls on Daring Pair.

Teraf read on until he learned that Pan Doh Ra had completely recovered from the effects of the gas, but that his own case was "grave", before he tossed the sheet away.

Disregarding Vanya's pleas, he rose and dressed, feeling lightheaded still, but otherwise master of himself. There was too much to be done for him to remain in bed; the prince could not doubt the meaning of Pan Doh Ra's last words. He thought of the Hellenes, always spoiling for a fight; they worshipped Refo and

would follow him to destruction.

Then, there was the possibility of a surprise attack by the Egyptians, with reinforcements for Atlan months away across 90,000,000 miles of space. He must tell Zeus, of course, but first he must find his brother and endeavor to dissuade him. And Pan Doh Ra? What of her if Plu Toh Ra learned that she had disclosed the plot?

He must have been unconscious many hours for it was night again—as much night as it could be with the comet blazing overhead—when Teraf stepped out into the palace gardens. For an hour he prowled the park, then turned back to the palace, his mind made up. He would try to make Refo see his error and, if that failed, denounce him before the court.

As he reached this point in his reasoning he swung round a turn in the path and came upon a black-robed figure, its arms uplifted, its face turned toward the comet.

"Oh, Uranus, God of the Skies, smite this proud nation that dares mock your rituals," words tumbled from back-drawn lips. "Return us to the Golden Age, when the din of machinery did not defile your sacred groves; when our youths were not debauched, but followed in the footsteps of their fathers. Hurl your curse..."

"What mumbo-jumbo is this, Refo?" Teraf tried to make his tone casual.

"You!" gasped the king. "I thought you were dying... that you would at least have the grace to die after bringing shame upon our house and that of Egypt. Get out of my sight, false Titan."

"Have you been sniffing the oracle, too?" The younger man was flabbergasted. "What on Mars do you mean?"

"I mean you have ruined the woman who was to have been my wife... that you..."

"Was to have been your wife?" Teraf's eyes narrowed.

"You heard me. The Pharaoh called me this morning, apologized for her

disgraceful conduct and broke the engagement. She's being taken back to Sais now to become a temple virgin, if her father can arrange the... ah... technical difficulty."

Teraf dropped his hand to his sword hilt, then gritted his teeth and made one more effort to talk to this madman. "If what you're implying actually took place," he choked, "would we have been found unconscious?"

"It would have been easy enough to hold your heads over the gas stream when you thought you were discovered." The king was beside himself with rage. "You're no brother of mine; fawn on your Martians till the gods' blight falls on them, but never dare set foot in Athens again on pain of death."

"But you'll go back there to plot treachery against our father's people." The prince realized now that further pleas were useless. "I know about the revolt you're planning and by all the gods of Earth and Mars, I won't let Hellas be ruined to please a beetle-worshipping Egyptian."

"If you know that, you must die at once." Refo whipped out his slender dress sword and lunged as he spoke. Half-expecting the attack, Teraf leaped backward, and jerked out his own blade.

THEY STAMPED back and forth across the wanly-lit sward, each striving for an opening at throat or heart. The elder brother was the more powerful, but he was accustomed to swinging the two-edged, Hellenic short-sword and had never had expert training with the nimble Martian rapier.

Step by step. Teraf forced Refo backward until he managed to hem him against the wall of an ornamental grotto, where further retreat was impossible. Back and forth the thin blades quivered, always in contact. Twice Teraf drew blood from his opponent's breast, heart-high but not deep. Once he slipped on the dewy grass and felt an electric stab of pain as Refo's weapon grazed his side.

But the king was becoming winded.

More and more wildly he parried the machine-like thrusts of his brother. His timing became inaccurate; his arms seemed weighted. The time had come for the finishing stroke. Teraf's anger had been partially dissipated by the struggle. He knew his brother would never submit to disgrace; should he kill him as an act of mercy?

As he pondered, the earth beneath them seemed to shiver, like a great beast awakening from sleep. The light changed subtly; shadows danced together about the grotto.

Refo, who had been facing the comet, dropped his guard and stared, the duel forgotten. Teraf turned and did likewise, while the ground heaved like the sea. Against a background of ghastly green sky, the comet was growing! For several moments, it gave the impression of rushing to engulf the earth. But, as they watched in wonder, it split—then burst like an exploding shell.

The shock of that gargantuan explosion reached them a few breaths later; the earthquake redoubled, hurling them about like straws. A wind of hurricane proportions came howling from all directions.

Teraf lay on the trampled grass, staring at the remnants of the comet which were fading like sparks up a chimney. Then a tree which surmounted the grotto came crashing down upon him.



A beautifully wooded park-like country surrounded the city. Scattered over a large area of this were the villa residences of the wealthier classes. To the West lay a range of mountains, from which the water supply of the city was drawn. Atlas itself was built on the slopes of a hill which rose from the plain about 5,000 feet. On the summit of this hill lay the emperor's palace and gardens, in the centre of

which welled up from the earth a never-ending stream of water, supplying first the palace and the fountains in the gardens, thence flowing in the four directions and falling in cascades into a canal or moat which encompassed the palace grounds and thus separated them from the city which lay below on every side. From this canal four channels led the water through four quarters of the city to cascades which in their turn supplied another encircling canal at a lower level. There were four such canals forming concentric circles, the outermost and lowest of which was still above the level of the plain. A fifth canal at this lowest level but on a rectangular plan, received the constantly flowing water.

The Story of Atlantis—W. Scott-Elliott

ONCE MORE Teraf opened his eyes to stare into those of Dr. Vanya. "Tut!" fumed the ancient. "Do you live at this place all the time? I warn you, it will upset you."

The prince pushed away those withered hands and sat up. He was swathed in bandages and one shoulder ached infernally. "What happened?" he demanded. Then: "Where's Refo?"

"They said something about the comet exploding as the result of the opposing gravitations of Earth and Mars. Don't know much about it myself; been too busy taking care of those injured by the earthquake to find out. Quite a few people killed. Tree fell on you. Dislocated one shoulder and caused a slight concussion. You'll have to stay in bed a few days."

"But my brother; what happened to him?"

"Sit down, young man! Calm yourself. Your brother is well. Carried you in here after the quake. Was bleeding from several contusions but wouldn't stay to have them dressed."

"Where did he go?"

"My dear boy, how should I know? Now that I think of it, he did tell me to say to you that he was sorry, though for what I don't know. Now try to get

a little rest, like a good fellow."

But Teraf pushed him aside and stumbled toward the door. He must reach the Pitar before it was too late; the attack would come at once, he felt, since Refo must realize that the plot was known. He ran down the hill toward the audience chamber while the doctor trailed behind, protesting querulously.

The palace was in disorder. Here and there, great cracks yawned in the halls, while chunks of marble and plaster fallen from the ceiling made going difficult. Workmen were clearing away the debris; officials dashed back and forth through the rubble.

The prince found Zeus calmly dictating directions to Apollo for rescue work in the city. He started up when the bandaged apparition entered, then waved away his gaping secretary and limped forward.

Teraf stammered out his story, half-expecting to be disbelieved, but there was no doubt on the Pitar's face. Hardly was the tale told, when Zeus, his lame foot forgotten, leaped to the television-screen which filled one corner of the room. There he began pushing buttons and issuing crisp orders as directors of the various military stations appeared for a moment on the ground glass panel.

In the midst of this commotion the screen flashed imperatively and the hunched figure of Vulcan, seated in his office atop the Crooked Mountain, wavered into focus, "Beg to report the city in flames in the fifth circle," he cried. "Looting has started in the warehouses."

The twisted face faded and was replaced by that of General Ares, whose pale grey eyes were blazing with something akin to joy. "The City's in revolt," he chortled. "Have ordered out the first and second cohorts. We're holding most of the bridges, but the barbarians have captured several of them. Orders?"

"Throw up the fire screens," answered the Pitar. "After they're going, drop soldiers by airship where the

police are hardest pressed. Are the barbarians well armed? Who's leading them?"

"Commander at Station Three reports Plu Toh Ra and Refo have been seen among the barbarians. Many of the latter are unarmed and there seems no concerted plan of attack. Evidently, this had been planned months in advance, but was forced prematurely. Titans are taking no part in the attack so far."

THE SCREEN went blank. Zeus, walking as quickly as though he had two good feet, led Teraf to the window through which only a day before they had looked at the comet. It commanded a superb view of the city, with its five canals lying like concentric silver rings among the soaring buildings.

Many fires now could be seen blazing throughout the town. Through them, little groups of Martians and Titans fled hither and thither, pursued by the barbarian hordes.

The second circle—that which enclosed the barracks—was, however, a bustle or organized activity. The relatively-few soldiers were under arms and standing in solid ranks beside airship hangars. Covers were being dragged from infra-heat reflectors, so the guns might be trained upon the principal avenues of approach to the citadel.

The greatest congestion was at the heads of the many canal bridges. At such points the attack seemed going forward in an organized manner and the loyal patrols were hardpressed.

Then, as they watched, the water of the four inner canals caught fire! At first it boiled, then burst into flames as though it had been gasoline. These flames mounted throwing clouds of lanky smoke which hung low over the water. In their terrific heat many bridges melted and crumpled, dropping those who had been caught on them into the cauldrons beneath.

"There you have the horrors of war, prince," sighed the Pitar as he tugged

at his curly beard. "Good, silly, brave men dumped to their deaths like rats. General Ares' diabolic invention is saving Atlan. For years he's been spending a large part of the military appropriation on chemical bombs which he sunk at intervals in the bottoms of the canals, where they could be ignited by radiowaves from Bab El. Doesn't last long. Look!"

Already the circular sheets of flames were dying, and their smoke screens being swept away by the breeze. But what a different scene was presented as the air cleared; the barbarians were stampeding, trapped by the canals which still were full of boiling water.

Now from the second circle, cigar-shaped, wingless airships were scudding over the city to alight on rooftops or public squares. As they touched ground, their quotas of fifty soldiers would hurl themselves upon some still-belligerent group of barbarians. The police also were rallying, and the fire department was at work in the melee, extinguishing burning buildings.

"What's that?" Teraf gripped the arm of his chief and pointed as, from the fourth, or business circle, a tiny ship flashed upward toward the setting sun.

"White and gold—the colors of Helias," gritted the Pitar as he leaped for the vision screen. "He must be stopped."

IT WAS too late. Before the orders could be issued, the fast flyer had disappeared toward the northeast. A moment later a mammoth bat-like thing soared up from the roof of one of the larger warehouses.

"It's a pterodactyl!" shouted Teraf. Through the Pitar's binoculars, he could clearly make out the chalk-white face of Pan Doh Ra and the sardonic, countenance of her father, as they were revealed by the reptile's flapping wings.

For a while it was touch and go. The pterodactyl was much slower than the ships which rose in pursuit, but it had

a head start. Sonny headed straight for the cloud of smoke, which had been whipped from the burning canals, and disappeared within it.

"They've escaped, too," sighed Zeus as he turned off the useless screen and limped wearily back to the window. "The smoke won't dissipate until nightfall. That means more bloodshed; more misery.

"I'm too easy, Teraf," he continued as he sank into his throne. "I've distrusted both Plu Toh Ra and Refo for months. Reports have filtered in... but I wouldn't believe them. What have they to gain? Liberty?"

He laughed bitterly. "The barbarians have more liberty under Martian rule than any of them could have dreamed of a century ago. We have brought them release from their bickering, ignorant kings. We have seen that they no longer starve in the midst of plenty. By Chronus, we've almost made them our equals. And yet, for a bit of loot, they would still follow their old leaders. I don't understand."

He unstopped a flagon of nectar and poured a bumper of the heady liquor for his guest and another for himself. "Call Apollo," he groaned. "I've got to have this damned foot massaged."

Outside, in the lurid glow of sunset, the city was being restored to order. Fires were dying down; lights flicked on. A few leaders of the barbarians, who had not been killed or arrested, were urging their followers into suicidal attempts to break the cordons thrown about them. But their guns were exhausted and their swords were pitifully useless against the ruddy sparkle of the weapons of the soldiers and police.

To all appearances Atlan was returning to normal. And yet Teraf, studying the city over the top of his untasted glass, knew somehow that it would never be the same again. He thought of old Plu Toh Ra muttering, "*Thy days are numbered,*" and shivered.